

## Caribou, river and ocean: Harvaqtuurmiut landscape organization and orientation

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### Résumé de l'article

Les Harvaqtuurmiut habitaient le territoire Harvaqtuuq — le bas de la rivière Kazan — situé entre la décharge de Hikuligjuaq (le lac Yathkyed) et l'embouchure de la rivière à Qamani'tuaq (le lac Baker). Les Harvaqtuurmiut vivaient de façon recluse et leur subsistance était principalement assurée par la migration du caribou. Selon la perception des Harvaqtuurmiut, le paysage était structuré et orienté par trois influences majeures: la migration du caribou, l'écoulement de la rivière et la proximité de l'océan. Les effets de l'organisation et de l'orientation de ces trois influences sont expliqués par l'analyse de toponymes harvaqtuurmiut. Les concepts concernant l'écoulement de la rivière et la proximité de l'océan étaient enchâssés dans la langue inuktitut au moment de la migration des Inuit vers Harvaqtuuq au milieu du 19<sup>ième</sup> siècle. La force de la migration du caribou sur l'environnement devint une influence très importante sur la perception des Harvaqtuurmiut concernant l'organisation et l'orientation du paysage seulement après que ceux-ci se soient adaptés à un mode de subsistance à l'intérieur des terres.

# Caribou, river and ocean: Harvaqtuurmiut landscape organization and orientation

Darren Keith\*

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Les Harvaqtuurmiut habitaient le territoire Harvaqtuuq — le bas de la rivière Kazan — situé entre la décharge de Hikuligjuaq (le lac Yathkyed) et l'embouchure de la rivière à Qamani'tuaq (le lac Baker). Les Harvaqtuurmiut vivaient de façon recluse et leur subsistance était principalement assurée par la migration du caribou. Selon la perception des Harvaqtuurmiut, le paysage était structuré et orienté par trois influences majeures: la migration du caribou, l'écoulement de la rivière et la proximité de l'océan. Les effets de l'organisation et de l'orientation de ces trois influences sont expliqués par l'analyse de toponymes harvaqtuurmiut. Les concepts concernant l'écoulement de la rivière et la proximité de l'océan étaient enchâssés dans la langue inuktitut au moment de la migration des Inuit vers Harvaqtuuq au milieu du 19<sup>ème</sup> siècle. La force de la migration du caribou sur l'environnement devint une influence très importante sur la perception des Harvaqtuurmiut concernant l'organisation et l'orientation du paysage seulement après que ceux-ci se soient adaptés à un mode de subsistance à l'intérieur des terres.

**Abstract:** Caribou, river and ocean: Harvaqtuurmiut landscape organization and orientation

The Harvaqtuurmiut were an Inuit society whose territory was Harvaqtuuq—the lower Kazan River—between the outlet of Hikuligjuaq (Yathkyed Lake) and the river's mouth at Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake). The Harvaqtuurmiut lived a completely inland existence and their subsistence revolved largely around the migration of caribou. In Harvaqtuurmiut perception, the landscape was organized and given orientation by three important influences: the migration of caribou; the flow of the river; and the relative location of the ocean. The organizing and orienting effects of these three influences are demonstrated through an analysis of Harvaqtuurmiut place names. Concepts related to the flow of the river and the relative location of the ocean were imbedded in the Inuktitut language at the time of Inuit migration to Harvaqtuuq in the mid-19th century. The environmental force of the caribou migration became very influential in Harvaqtuurmiut perception of landscape organization and orientation only after they had adapted to subsistence inland.

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## Introduction

Place names are part of the symbolic system used by societies to communicate spatial knowledge. Through intimate experience of their environment and the act of naming, people appropriate their geography (Basso 1990: 43) and establish their home territory. Place names are imbued with cultural information that is coded in their meanings, and in their associated narratives. In this way, place names function as mnemonics—archives of cultural knowledge to be read from the land.

Place names are texts for individual or group reference. Because these texts are collectively known, they are an expression of a society's perception of a landscape. Place names are the embodiment of the cultural and linguistic concepts that a society brings to bear on the environment, and that society's experience of subsistence in a specific environment. Mark Nuttall has described Greenlandic Inuit perception of landscape as "thought space" or "memoryscape" (Nuttall 1993: 77) where environment is ordered and conceptualized "through the interaction of imagination, thought, experience and language" (Nuttall 1993: 80).

Upon analysis, the traditional place names of the Harvaqtuurmiut, whose traditional territory is located south of Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake) on Harvaqtuuq<sup>1</sup> (Kazan River) (Figure 1), reveal the way that one particular Inuit society<sup>2</sup> perceived, experienced, organized and oriented its environment. Before centralization into communities, the Harvaqtuurmiut lived a subsistence lifestyle based purely on the environment and resources of the central barrens. Their most important subsistence resource was the caribou, and their most important subsistence activity was the caribou hunt at the caribou crossing. Place names reveal that for the Harvaqtuurmiut the landscape is organized and given orientation by three important influences: the fall migration of caribou; the flow of the river; and the relative location of the ocean.

This paper draws on material contained in the author's Master's thesis (Keith 2000). The thesis took an exhaustive database of 272 place names and applied a typology that organized the names into categories based on their meaning. The categories were: Geographical/Literal-Descriptive, Mythological, Historical, Spiritual, Resource, Metaphorical, and Human Occupation. In addition, the meanings of specific place names from each category were analysed to understand what Inuit concepts organize Harvaqtuurmiut landscape.

The place names and oral traditions of the Harvaqtuurmiut were collected during fieldwork conducted between 1994 and 1997 as part of the historic sites program of Parks Canada (Harvaqtuurmiut Elders *et al.* 1994; Keith and Scottie 1997). The place

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<sup>1</sup> Harvaqtuuq is the Inuktitut name for the stretch of the Kazan River between Hikuligjuaq (Yathkyed Lake) and the mouth of the river at Baker Lake. It means "the big drift" referring to the strong current and rapids over its length.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of society used in this paper is that outlined by Burch (1986: 115-116) as "[...] a relatively (although not absolutely) discrete network of families connected to one another by marriage, descent, and partnership ties. In addition to owning separate territories, each was characterized by a distinctive subdialect of the Caribou Inuit dialect, slightly contrasting clothing styles, a general ideology of uniqueness, and a sense of superiority over other peoples."

name data collected during that research expanded on and corroborated data collected by Ludger Müller-Wille and Linna Weber Müller-Wille (1989-1991) as part of their NUNA-TOP projects. The resulting database of 272 place names was intended to be exhaustive, and is the most complete record of traditional Inuit place names in the traditional territory of Harvaqtuurmiut.

## Harvaqtuurmiut origins and history

The members of the Fifth Thule Expedition included the Harvaqtuurmiut in a category of cultural affiliation that they called the “Caribou Eskimo” (Burch 1988: 82; Csonka 1995: 4; Rasmussen 1927: 57), a classification that continues to be applied by contemporary anthropologists. The designation was chosen primarily due to the overwhelming importance of the caribou to the livelihood of the Paallirmiut, Ahiarmiut, Hauniqtuurmiut, Qairnirmiut *and* Harvaqtuurmiut societies, who share a common cultural and linguistic heritage (Figure 1).<sup>3</sup>

Theories concerning the origin of Caribou Inuit began with Rasmussen (1930) and Birket-Smith (1930) whose theory was derived from Steensby (1917 in Burch 1988: 84). For Rasmussen and Birket-Smith, Caribou Inuit represented the remnants of an original Eskimo culture that developed in the interior, and subsequently spread throughout arctic North America and Greenland (Csonka 1995: 7; Rasmussen 1930). Therkel Mathiassen of the same expedition had another theory, however, that postulated the *in situ* development of historic Inuit societies, including Caribou Inuit, from resident Thule culture populations who originally migrated from Alaska (Mathiassen 1927). Mathiassen’s theory has since been supported and elaborated by arctic archaeologists (see Burch 1978 for discussion). The most current theory of Caribou Inuit origins however is that of Ernest Burch. Burch argues in support of a theory originating with William E. Taylor (1972), that historic Caribou Inuit were descendants of a group of migrants from the Copper Inuit area of the arctic coast in the late 17th century (Burch 1978).<sup>4</sup> This corroboration of Taylor’s hypothesis rests on two pieces of evidence: the sudden appearance in the archaeological record of the Hudson Bay west coast of dwelling designs dated to the late 17th century and typical of, then, contemporary Copper Inuit building style; and, evidence of the level of linguistic relatedness of present day Copper and Caribou Inuit dialects (Burch 1978). In the most contemporary study of a Caribou Inuit society, Yvon Csonka pointed out that this version of events remains the most current hypothesis though it stays unproven (Csonka 1995: 397-98).

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<sup>3</sup> The names of the groups have been placed within the general area of the historic territory of these societies and is not meant to accurately depict territorial extent. I have constructed the map partially based on that of Csonka (1995: 187) and partly based on my own knowledge. Joan Scottie (pers. comm. 1999) was told by Qairnirmiut Elders Titus Seeteenak and Martha Taliruaq, in October 1999, that designation Qairnirmiut comes from a hill named Qairniq located close to modern day Corbett Inlet. Seeteenak said that the society moved to the Chesterfield Inlet area in the early 1920s as there was a fur trader in the area. Later they moved up the inlet and into the Qamani’tuaq [Baker Lake] area. For this reason I have placed Qairnirmiut between Qairniq and Chesterfield Inlet.

<sup>4</sup> Yvon Csonka (1995: 72-77) reviews this argument in his ethnohistorical study.

Whatever their origins, ancestors of contemporary Caribou Inuit were definitely on the Tariurjuaq [Hudson Bay] coast in the first half of the 18th century, when they traded with Hudson Bay Company (HBC) vessels sailing north of Fort Prince of Wales (Churchill). Csonka (1995: 393) places them there as early as 1619. Based on historical documents, it is Burch's opinion that around the 1820s the Caribou Inuit of the Tariurjuaq (Hudson Bay) coast split into two different societies: one to the south, oriented toward the HBC post at Kuugjuaq (Churchill); and one oriented towards Igluligaarjuk (Chesterfield Inlet) and Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake) (Burch 1986: 113). Following this initial split, a shortage of caribou along the coast in the 1840s forced members of the southern group to move further and further inland—as far as Harvaqtuuq (Kazan River) (Burch 1977: 143, 1986: 114). By 1858 there was an inland population that had nothing to do with the ocean (Csonka 1995: 394). Many stayed and thrived and, as the population grew, the original two societies of Burch's reconstruction, became five societies by 1880 (Burch 1986: 114).

The period 1880-1915 has been referred to as a "Classic Period" for Caribou Inuit, in which the five distinct societies continued to grow and fully elaborate a way of life based on caribou (*ibid.*: 115). A period referred to as the "Great Famine" followed the Classic Period, lasting from 1915 to 1925 and devastating Caribou Inuit populations as a whole. Dramatically, a population of some 1500 individuals in 1915, was reduced to only 500 by 1925 (*ibid.*: 129). The Harvaqtuurmiut were reduced from 186 in 1918 to 74 in 1922 (Burch 1988: 90). Recent archaeological research along Harvaqtuuq (Kazan) and Kangirjuaq (Thelon) Rivers has supported Burch's thesis that there were once very large populations aggregating at campsites along those rivers, as evidenced by the size of their camps, and their investment in dwelling structures (Friesen and Stewart 1994).

The Great Famine was rooted in two causal factors: first, the additional hardship of a cyclical low in the caribou population made the already risky business of intercepting the annual migration a daunting task; second, to compound the situation further, the traditional emergency resource of muskox was absent due to overhunting by 1900 (Burch 1977, 1986: 24). The Harvaqtuurmiut were nearing the end of this stage of their history when the Fifth Thule Expedition visited Harvaqtuuq in May 1922 (see Treude in this volume).

## Harvaqtuurmiut seasonal round

Reconstruction of the Harvaqtuurmiut seasonal round<sup>5</sup> is based on the oral traditions of the people themselves, as well as the author's field notes from two

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<sup>5</sup> It was the intent of the author during the interviews and background research that underlie this section, to concentrate on the elements of the seasonal round that were traditional and therefore could be assumed to have existed in a similar form during pre-contact times. The absence of references to trade goods, trapping activities and trading trips is due to this approach.

research seasons. Where there are no specific references the reader should assume that the source is the author's field notes (Keith 1997).<sup>6</sup>

### *Upinraqhaaq (April/May/June)*

Members of the Fifth Thule Expedition arrived on Harvaqtuuq in May 1922, during the *upinraqhaaq* season. It is the season when the snow begins to melt, and bare spots appear on the land. In this period, the Harvaqtuurmiut abandoned their igloos and moved on foot to their spring campsites (called *aukhiiviit* = melting places), where they first moved into *qarmat*<sup>7</sup> (or converted their igloo into a *qarmaq*), and then into tents. Tents were erected on high ground where they could have a floor of large pebbles (*tuapaq*) that allowed melt water to drain away from the site, while the occupants of the tents stayed dry (David Tiktaalaaq pers. comm. 1994). Any cached meat or dry meat left over from the winter was brought along to the spring camp to sustain people while they waited for the return of the caribou (George Tatanniq in Mannik 1998: 224). When meat supplies were low, people jigged for lake trout (Julie Hanguhaaq Tuluqtuq in Mannik 1998: 200).

Spring campsite location was dictated by people's knowledge of where the migrating caribou herds were likely to pass. The first herd of caribou that arrived in *upinraqhaaq* (in May or June) is called *qanrallat* or the "shedding herd" (Peter Aasivaaryuk in Mannik 1993: 26). The *qanrallat* usually arrived at Harvaqtuuq when there was still ice on the river, and the hunters hid at places on the land along their migration route and shot animals as they passed. During some years the ice conditions on the river became unstable, and breakup began before the *qanrallat* had crossed. This forced the herd to pass time on the south side of the river until breakup was finished.<sup>8</sup> Many caribou could be killed by Harvaqtuurmiut when these conditions arose. Sometimes the *qanrallat* did not arrive due to the herd moving through a different area and not passing through some, or all, of the Harvaqtuurmiut camps. This meant hardship for all (Peter Aasivaaryuk in Mannik 1993: 31).

Caribou harvested during *upinraqhaaq* that were not immediately needed were processed into dried meat (*nipku*). In addition to *nipku*, *patqutit* was made by removing the marrow from caribou long bones and storing it in caribou stomachs. Openings in the stomach were tied off and it was then left in the shade to dry (Elizabeth Tunnuq in Harvaqtuurmiut Elders *et al.* 1994: 123; Elizabeth Tunnuq in Mannik 1998: 240). *Patqutit* and whole marrowbones were cached for later consumption (Barnabas Piryuq in Mannik 1998: 167). Although it was possible in times of plenty, to kill many

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<sup>6</sup> This specific description of the Harvaqtuurmiut seasonal round fits the general descriptions offered by previous fieldworkers (Arima 1984; Burch 1986; Csonka 1995; Rassmussen 1930a).

<sup>7</sup> A *qarmaq* (plural = *qarmat*) is a snowhouse that has snow walls and a roof of skins (often the caribou skin tent). It was used when the weather was too warm to have a snow domed structure.

<sup>8</sup> The section of the Kazan River called Harvaqtuuq is dominated by Thirty Mile Lake that runs west to east and this is why the caribou are described as being on the south side of the river before crossing it in the spring.

caribou, Inuit did not kill too many as the meat could spoil, and warblefly infestation made skins useless for clothing (Peter Aasivaaryuk in Mannik 1993: 31).

In addition to the harvesting and processing of caribou, *upinraqhaaq* was also the season when kayaks were built, repaired and recovered. Wood collected during the winter months from trips to Tipjalik (Beverly Lake) to the northwest of Harvaqtuuq, was used to build or repair kayak frames (Julie Hanguhaaq Tuluqtuq in Mannik 1998: 200). These new frames (or old frames that were removed from winter storage) were covered with bull caribou skins that had been used as bedding skins over the winter. It was important to have the thick skins of bulls to cover the kayak, and these normally stiff skins were softened by being slept on for a season. The skins were soaked and the hair removed. Wet skins were sewn together and allowed to dry on the kayak frame that was held in rock forms on the ground to maintain its shape.

Other bedding skins were also soaked, and the hair removed, for the purpose of making hairless summer clothing, kamiks and waterproof footwear (Elizabeth Tunnuq in Keith and Scottie 1997).

### ***Upinraaq (July/early August)***

When the weather becomes hot, usually in July, the season is referred to as *upinraaq*. During *upinraaq* a portion of the herd that crossed the river moving north during *upinraqhaaq* returns, moving south. The *qivirat*, or the returning herd, crosses the now open Harvaqtuuq at habitually used crossing places. The *qivirat* are the last of the large herds of the season at Harvaqtuuq.

During *upinraaq* the Harvaqtuurmiut moved to their camps on the south shore of caribou water crossing places (*nalluit*), sometimes several families together, to intercept the caribou and hunt them from kayaks (George Tatanniq in Mannik 1998: 225). Caribou hunters in kayaks (*upaktut*) worked together as a group if there were enough hunters and kayaks. The leader of the group, usually an elder, directed the hunt. Hunters in kayaks hid along the shoreline until the herd entered the water and the lead caribou passed. Once the herd was deemed to be committed to crossing the river, the hunters came out from their hiding places and surrounded a group of caribou in their kayaks. The lead hunter, and perhaps another, were at the back of the swimming group of caribou and lanced the caribou that they selected. Other hunters surrounded the caribou on both sides and forced them to swim slightly upstream, slowing them down and keeping them together (Keith 1994-1998). If a good animal, or animals, escaped and were about to reach the other shore, the lead hunter called to other members of the camp, who ran around on shore making noise and waving their arms to force the caribou back into the centre of the river (Luke Tunguaq in Keith and Scottie 1997: Appendix 20).

During these *upinraaq* hunts at the caribou crossings, many caribou could be killed. However, Harvaqtuurmiut limited their kill due to the huge job of processing the meat into *nipku* (dry meat). The heat during *upinraaq* meant that it was not to be long

before meat that was not properly dried would rot. The number of caribou that could be processed was limited to the number of members of the camp available to do the work. Meat was dried by cutting it all into thin strips and laying these strips out to dry on bushes or pebbles (*tuapaq*), allowing it to dry quickly and evenly, provided the weather conditions cooperated. Meat that was set out to dry on a flat surface did not dry quickly and would taste bad (Elizabeth Tunnuq in Mannik 1998: 240).

In addition to *nipku*, the Harvaqtuurmiut continued to prepare *patqutit* by the same method it was prepared in *upinraqhaaq*. *Patqutit*, marrow bones and dried meat were cached during *upinraaq* in separate packages made of caribou skins. The skins of bulls taken during *upinraaq* were called *itsat*, as they were often used to make tents (George Tatanniq in Mannik 1998: 228). Skins that were not good enough to be used for tents were staked out to dry, and used to package items for caching:

Caribou bulls' skins were stretched and *pauqtuq* [cut along the edge of the skin and nailed down with old ribs and dried this way] to use for bundling. The spring [*upinraaq*] skins were used for this purpose. Everything was bundled into skins for storage. *Nipku* and all the intestines were packed separately. Even the bones were bundled separately and stored. They were all bundled and stored so well that they did not get wet in the fall rain. Blackberry grass was placed on top to prevent water leakage. It was also put in holes for sealing (Elizabeth Tunnuq in Harvaqtuurmiut Elders *et al.* 1994: 123).

When we had a lot of dried meat from the spring and we were going to be travelling or moving to another land we would dig out the earth to make a hollow and put some of the dried meat into caribou skins. We would use bull caribou skins that had been caught in the spring, and stretched to dry. Two skins would be put together by tying ropes through holes along the edges of the skin, and the dried meat would be placed on the skins, which would then be tied together, making sure there wouldn't be any leaks. The skins full of dried meat would be placed in the hollow, with flat rocks around and over it, then earth and lichen would be used to cover up the holes (Elizabeth Tunnuq in Mannik 1998: 240-241).

The type of cache described by Tunnuq is called a *hirluaq* and is constructed out of flat stones piled so that they have the appearance of a small shelter when they are empty. The gaps between the rocks were stuffed with blackberry grass, as she mentioned, or other vegetation to make them watertight.

### *Aujahajuq/Aujaq (mid-August/September)*

The rest of the hot part of the summer was spent hunting caribou that were now to be found as solitary individuals or small groups. People often visited other camps by boat or on foot to keep up communications (Luke Tunguaq in Keith and Scottie 1997: Appendix 19). In August the leaves on the tundra vegetation begin to turn colour, marking the season called *aujahajuq*. This colour change can readily be noticed on the *avaalaqiaq* (“dwarf birch”). Caribou continued to cross the river from north to south in August, although not in great herds like the *qivirat* and *qanrallat*. Only small groups crossed for the rest of the migration. Caribou taken in the early to middle of August, when the weather turns cold—during *aujaq*—are referred to as *hagalaat* (“short hair”), as their hair is just beginning to grow longer after shedding.



In late August the hair of the caribou becomes long enough to make good inner winter clothing, and is referred to as *uqquqhat* (“future warmth”) (Peter Aasivaaryuk in Harvaqtuurmiut *et al.* 1994: 11). Later in *aujaq*, the hair of the caribou gets yet longer, and these skins are good for outer winter clothing (Luke Tunnuq in Keith and Scottie 1997: Appendix 17). Beginning when the caribou skins reach *uqquqhat*, it was important for the Harvaqtuurmiut to be at the water crossings to hunt the caribou by kayak. Inuit might return to the same crossing hunted in *upinraaq*, or move to another that was predicted as more likely to be used by the caribou, based on available information about their movements. The method of kayak hunting did not change from *upinraaq* to *aujaq*. There were changes, however, in the processing of the meat that was harvested.

The weather is significantly colder in *aujaq* than in *upinraaq*. By the time the caribou skins are right for inner winter clothing, the weather is cold enough that butchered carcasses can be cached without drying the meat. Cooler temperatures also meant that Harvaqtuurmiut could maximize their kill, as there was no danger of carcasses rotting before people could process them. This was very important, as it was *aujaq* surpluses that were so essential to the survival of the group through the winter until the return of the *qanrallat*. Caribou harvested at this time were at their seasonal peak of health as evidenced by thick layers of fat (*tunnuk*). *Tunnuk* was boiled until it formed a kind of lard that was used to fuel the *qulliq* (“soapstone”) lamp in winter.

### ***Ukiaqhaq/Ukiaq (October/early November)***

When the snow starts falling and staying on the ground this season is called *ukiaqhaq*. Later when the ponds and puddles freeze so that they will not melt again, this is termed *ukiakq*. This was a period of transition for the Harvaqtuurmiut, when the caribou migration was over and there was very little snow on the ground for travelling. Women used this time to sew the winter clothing that would soon be needed in *ukiuq*.

### ***Ukiuq (mid-November to April)***

At the beginning of *ukiuq*, when the lakes are frozen solid and it is very cold<sup>9</sup>, the Harvaqtuurmiut moved away from the river to one of the surrounding lakes. Selection of winter camping locations was based on an evaluation of available resources in the area. Availability of fish, wintering caribou and fuel (willows) for cooking and drying out clothing was all assessed as early as the summer and early fall when cache locations were chosen (David Tiktaalaaq in Mannik 1993: 58-59):

In the months before Christmas people would start travelling by dog team to get close to their cached meat and winter camp near their cache all through the winter [...] (George Tatanniq in Mannik 1998: 228).

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<sup>9</sup> Joan Scottie (pers. comm. 1999) explained that *ukiuq* usually started about mid-November when all the lakes are frozen and the weather has turned very cold.

The comfort of Inuit families through the winter was largely dependent on the success of the fall caribou crossing hunt. If families did not have ample cached meat, they had to try and augment their resources by: hunting the scattered caribou which remained around Harvaqtuuq year round; jigging for lake trout in the lakes; or hunting ptarmigan and arctic hare. Priorities were set in an emergency and the first members of the group not to eat were the dogs. If the situation was bad enough the dogs died leaving the family much less mobile (Luke Tunguaq in Keith and Scottie 1997: Appendix 10).

The mobility afforded by the snow cover allowed Inuit to travel long distances. In addition to trips to the trading post at Qamani'tuaq (Baker Lake), the opportunity was there to obtain valuable wood supplies from sources to the south, or from the *Tipjalik* (Beverly Lake) area:

Men would bring meat with them when they were going to go out to bring some wood for their use. They'd go to the tree line in the Paallirmiut area to get wood and also around the Thelon tree line. So during the early winter Harvaqtuuqmiut would go to these two places to get wood for tent poles or *qajaq* or *qamutik* or anything they want to make (George Tatanni in Mannik 1998: 228).

People who had qayaqs probably went to Tipyalik [Beverly Lake] to get the wood to build them. They needed large bushes and branches. The bushes were used as ribs across the qayaq and the ribs would be covered with caribou skin hides [...] (Julie Hanguhaaq Tuluqtuq in Mannik 1998: 200).

This detailed presentation of the Harvaqtuurmiut seasonal round demonstrates the key role that the caribou migration played in the ability of Inuit to survive the environmental conditions of the central barrens. Indeed, many place names in Harvaqtuurmiut territory refer to caribou and the caribou crossing hunt.

## **Caribou, river and ocean: Three organizing and orienting influences**

### ***Caribou migration***

During the period when the caribou herds were in the Harvaqtuuq area in large numbers (May to September) it was a matter of survival that Harvaqtuurmiut intercepted the herds and killed as many animals as they could process and cache.<sup>10</sup> The number of place names in the study area referring directly to caribou and their movements or the activities of people hunting caribou reflects their importance. Many of the place names in Harvaqtuurmiut territory refer to the actions and strategies of the caribou hunters, and the behaviours of the caribou at traditional caribou crossings.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> During spring hunting the number of animals killed was limited by the amount of meat that could be processed into dry meat before the meat spoiled from the heat and from maggots growth.

<sup>11</sup> In the typology applied in the author's thesis (Keith 2000) the activities of caribou hunters and the behaviour of caribou fall in the categories of Human Activity and Resource respectively. These two categories taken together represent 33% of the place names in Harvaqtuurmiut territory.

The method of hunting caribou at water crossings produced the most animals and, therefore, was the key activity for survival. Most of the names referring to caribou in the study area refer in some way to caribou crossing the river. The influence that caribou movements had over the Harvaqtuurmiut perception of landscape orientation was demonstrated by Robert Rundstrom in his analysis of Caribou Inuit hand-drawn maps. He found that in the maps Inuit tended to rotate landscape features “to conform to an east-west trend” and that these rotations “occurred at important caribou crossings” (Rundstrom 1987: 181). “Thus, the idea that caribou-hunting Inuit may have conceived selected locations as perpendicular blockades to the north-south seasonal migrations of the caribou finds support in this study. It appears that fluvial locations where caribou movements took place were crucial to the conceived directional orientation of places” (*ibid.*: 181-182). The magnitude of influence caribou movements had on the Harvaqtuurmiut extended to their perception of how the landscape itself was oriented. This conclusion is also supported when one looks at the place names.

In the lifetimes of the Harvaqtuurmiut elders who were involved in the present study, the most important areas of subsistence activity in their territory were the caribou crossings at Qikiqtaalugjuaq, Itimniq, Piqqiarjuk and Piqqiq. Each of these campsites was a main focus of activity, and it is from these vantage points that Harvaqtuurmiut organized the landscape through naming. Linguist Thomas Correll defined the term focus as “the nexus of that population’s activity [and is] an information centre out from which directions, distances, proximal relations, routes and locations are determined” (Correll 1976: 176). A good example of an important Harvaqtuurmiut focus is the Qikiqtaalugjuaq area (Figure 2). The most significant hunts that occurred at this site were the interception of the *qivirat* (“the returning herd”) in July and the remaining caribou, which cross in small groups in August and September. At these times of year the caribou were moving from north to south through the crossing. Inuit camped at one of the three sites in the area; Ikpiq, Hannirut or Pappikkaq.

The place names for features surrounding the Qikiqtaalugjuaq area demonstrate that caribou migration, and specifically fall caribou migration, has had a significant influence on Harvaqtuurmiut organization and orientation of landscape. When caribou cross here they cross the island Qikiqtaalugjuaq. In order to get into position to do this, they have to get around the lake Aggiria&iq. This name refers to the fact that this lake gets in the way of caribou that want to get down to the water crossing. As they approach the water they are said to walk with a particular gait, which is termed *aggiqtut*. The caribou must make their way around this lake in order to begin to *aggiqtut*.

When the caribou entered the water they often attempted to spend the least amount of time in the water and got out on the small islands on the north side of Qikiqtaalugjuaq. The name for the island Tuttaaraq means “stepping place” and refers to this phenomenon. When swimming across the river, the animals are taken by the current and often land in the Utiqhiurvik (“where they return”) area.

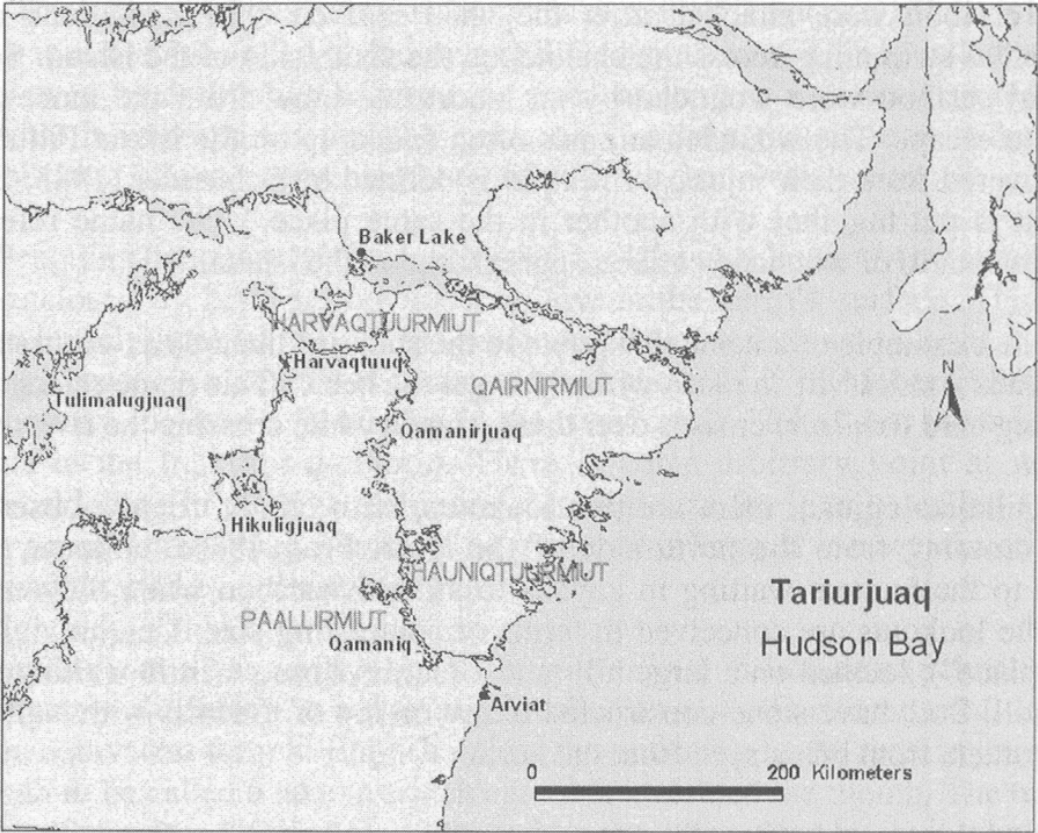


Figure 1. Locations of five Caribou Inuit societies in the 20th century.

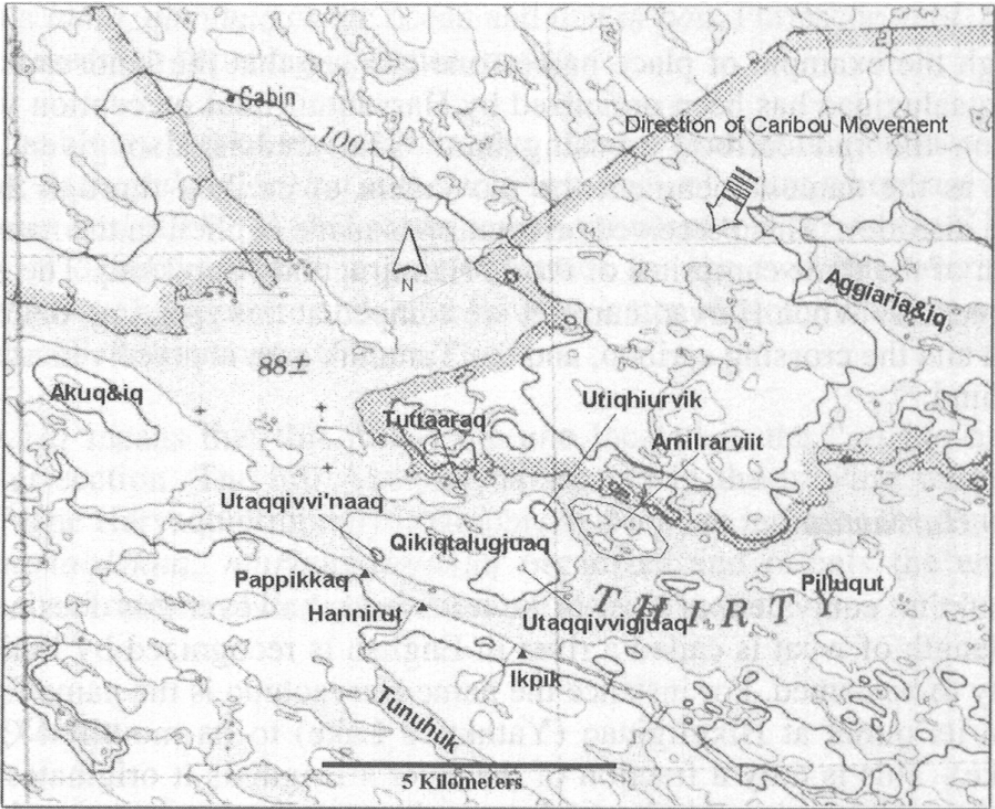


Figure 2. Qikiqtaalugjuaq area.

The caribou were attacked after they had crossed Qikiqtaalugjuaq and were committed to swimming across the channel on the south side of the island. Sometimes individual caribou were wounded by an inaccurate blow from the lance and were allowed to escape. The wounded animals often ended up on the island Pilluqut where they recovered from their injuries. *Pilluquti* is defined by Schneider (1985: 253) as “a thing that is put together with another in the same place.” The name refers to this common scenario of wounded caribou aggregating on the island.

Another example of a name that refers to the status of the area as a crossing are the three islands Amilarviit “a place where you get the herd.” This name refers to the fact that the big herd (*amilrat*) crosses over these islands while crossing the river.

At Qikiqtaalugjuaq, there are two lookouts, with blinds, for the observation of caribou crossing from the north side of the river. From these lookouts, observers signaled to the hunters waiting in kayaks to ambush caribou when they entered the water. The lookouts are conceived in terms of contrasting size: Utaqqivvigjuaq (“big waiting place”), located on a large hill; and Utaqqivvi’naaq (“little waiting place”), a small knoll. Both have stone-constructed blinds on top of the hills with walls oriented to hide hunters from being seen from the north.

Behind the campsite Pappikkaq to the southwest there is another lookout on a hill called Qatqa’tuaq (“big look-out hill”). A *qatqa* is a hill with a good vantage point for observing the surrounding landscape either for wildlife or for enemies (Joan Scottie, pers. comm. 1999).

Through the example of place names one can see that the landscape around the focus Qikiqtaalugjuaq has been organized by Harvaqtuurmiut perception with a heavy emphasis on the fall caribou crossing hunt. The area is also given an implicit orientation as the names document the movement of caribou through the area in a north-south direction. This perceived orientation is made explicit in the name Tunuhuk; a lake south of the three campsites of Ikpik, Hannirut and Pappikkaq. The name means “the back section” When Harvaqtuurmiut are camped at this crossing, their attention is to the north and the crossing caribou, and the Tunuhuk area is perceived as being in the back or behind.

### ***The River - Harvaqtuuq***

The Inuktitut equivalent of river is the term *kuuk*; however this does not mean that the entire length of what is called a river in English is recognized by Inuit as being a single entity to be named. For instance the name Harvaqtuuq is the name for the Kazan River from its outlet at Hikuligjuaq (Yathkyed Lake) to its mouth at Qamani’tuaq (Baker Lake). This is only a fraction of the river’s length as it originates in northern Saskatchewan. A river is conceived of as sections of moving water and intervening widenings in the river or what the Müller-Willes (1989-1991) categorize as river-lakes or river channels (Müller-Wille 1987). A lake which is the obvious product of an input river or stream and which is also drained by a river or stream is a river-lake or

*qamaniq*. This type of lake is set apart from a lake, which is not part of a moving water system but is either spring fed or fed by small feeder streams. This is called a *tahiq*. A *tahiq* may even be drained by a stream or river, as long as it is not also fed by one. Perhaps what is important is that the *qamaniq* is a lake that is seen to have some direction of flow. It is an intervening body of water in the river's course.

The Penguin Dictionary of Geography defines lake as follows: "An extensive sheet of water enclosed by land, occupying a hollow in the earth's surface. The name is sometimes loosely applied, too, to the widened part of a river or to a sheet of water lying along a coast even when it is connected with the sea [...]" (Moore 1988: 120). In English one may speak of a "widening in the river" and a "lake," but there is no term comparable to the Inuktitut *qamaniq*. There is some arbitrary point at which, in English, a widening in the river achieves a critical size for it to be called a lake. In Inuktitut a *qamaniq* remains a *qamaniq*, no matter how large, if it meets the criterion of being fed and drained by a sizeable stream.

The outlet from a *qamaniq* is termed a *murjungniq* in Inuktitut (Schneider 1985: 177). Conversely, the inflow to a *qamaniq* is called an *akuq* (Fortescue *et al.* 1994: 14). There is no equivalent term in English unless the widening in the river is judged to be large enough to be called a lake in which case this is termed the mouth. The term *akuq* is defined by Schneider (1985: 15) as "the tail on the parka worn by Inuit women." The use of this term for where a river enters the relatively still water of a *tahiq*, *qamaniq* or the ocean may be due to the characteristic shape it has which is reminiscent of the shape of a woman's parka tail. There is an analogous term for the point where moving water enters a *tahiq*, *qamaniq* or the ocean and that is *paa*. Fortescue *et al.* (1994: 245) define *paa* as meaning "opening, entrance, mouth."

Beside the binary pair of *murjungniq/akuq* there is another that delineates a similar phenomenon; *aariaq/akuq*. *Aariaq* is the area in a body of water where a river leaves a lake (Fortescue *et al.* 1994: 2), and seems to be equivalent to *murjungniq*.<sup>12</sup> This binary terminology is demonstrated in a pair of names for the two hills *Aariaq&iq* and *Akuq&iq* which are at opposite ends of a flowing water section including a significant area of rapids called *Itimningaq* (Figure 3).

*Aariaq&iq* means that this hill is the one located in the "*aariaq*-ness" of the moving water section. The hill *Akuq&iq* is located in the moving water section's "*akuq*-ness." The Harvaqtuurmiut hydrographic system that includes the concepts *kuuk*, *qamaniq*, *aariaq/akuq*, *murjungniq/akuq* organizes and orients the environment according to the direction of flow of sections of moving water.

### ***Tariuq: The Ocean***

Another source of organization and orientation in Harvaqtuurmiut conception is the direction of the ocean in relation to the land. The binary terms *kangilliq/killiiq*

<sup>12</sup> The concepts of *murjungniq* and *aariaq* need to be scrutinized more closely as there seems to be a subtle difference.

represent this relationship. According to Schneider (1985: 139) *kangilliq* means “thing that is further inland than another.” Fortescue *et al.* (1994: 157) agree with this definition and add that the root *kangi* means “bottom of bay, direction towards land, source of river.” Schneider (1985: 139) gives the meaning of *killiq* as “what is furthest toward the sea (opposite of *kangilliq*) [...]” This binary opposition is well known to linguists and is in use in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland), Nunavik (Northern Quebec), Sanikiluaq (Belcher Islands), Kivalliq (Keewatin) and the Qitirmiut (Kitikmeot) region (Canadian central Arctic coast) (Fortescue 1988: 6-16). In some areas it has a limited or local application, while in others it is applicable over a wide area (*ibid.*: 3).

In the Kivalliq (Keewatin), rivers flow to the sea from the west/northwest and this fits well with the Harvaqtuurmiut application of the term *kangilliq*. The corollary of this is that if one reckons the direction of the sea from the path of inland rivers, then the direction of the ocean is east/southeast. This fits well with the Harvaqtuurmiut application of the term *killiq*. An example of this terminology is found in the names of two lakes; Kangilliq Tullik and Killiq Tullik. The two are named as a pair with the first being *kangilliq* to the other, and the second being *killiq* to the first. Another example of this same relative pairing are two points named Tikira'tuaq Kangilliq and Tikira'tuaq Killiq.

These directional terms are also embedded in the Harvaqtuurmiut terminology for bays. Bays on water bodies that have their heads oriented towards the northwest are referred to as *kangiq&uk* (Figure 4). An example in Harvaqtuurmiut territory is *Kangiq&ulugjuaq* (“appearance of a large northwest pointing bay”). Bays with their heads oriented to the southeast are called *killinaugaq*. There are a few examples of these type of bays in the area: Killinauga'naaq, (“small southeast pointing bay”); Killinaugaq (“bay pointing towards the southeast”); and one named *Killiniq*. This system is applied regularly in the area. There is yet another class of bay which has a regular term that implies the bays orientation. *Qinnguq* has been defined by Fortescue *et al.* (1994: 309) as meaning “west side of lake” for the Caribou Inuit. The use of this term by Harvaqtuurmiut is a west facing bay. There are two examples in the study area: Qinngu'naaq (“little west pointing bay”); and Qinnguraujaq (“long narrow west pointing bay”).

Although the territory and subsistence life took place far inland from the Hudson Bay coast, their language—Inuktitut—had a pre-existing geographical concept that organized and oriented the landscape according to the location of the ocean in relation to the flow of the drainage system. This concept, as represented by the binary terms *kangilliq/killiq*, is embedded in the place names of the Harvaqtuurmiut area.

## Discussion

Before moving into the town of Baker Lake in the 1960s, the Harvaqtuurmiut were a people well adapted for the rigours of subsistence inland. An intimate knowledge of their physical territory and its use by migrating caribou was fundamental to their subsistence. According to current theory of Caribou Inuit origins, the ancestors of the

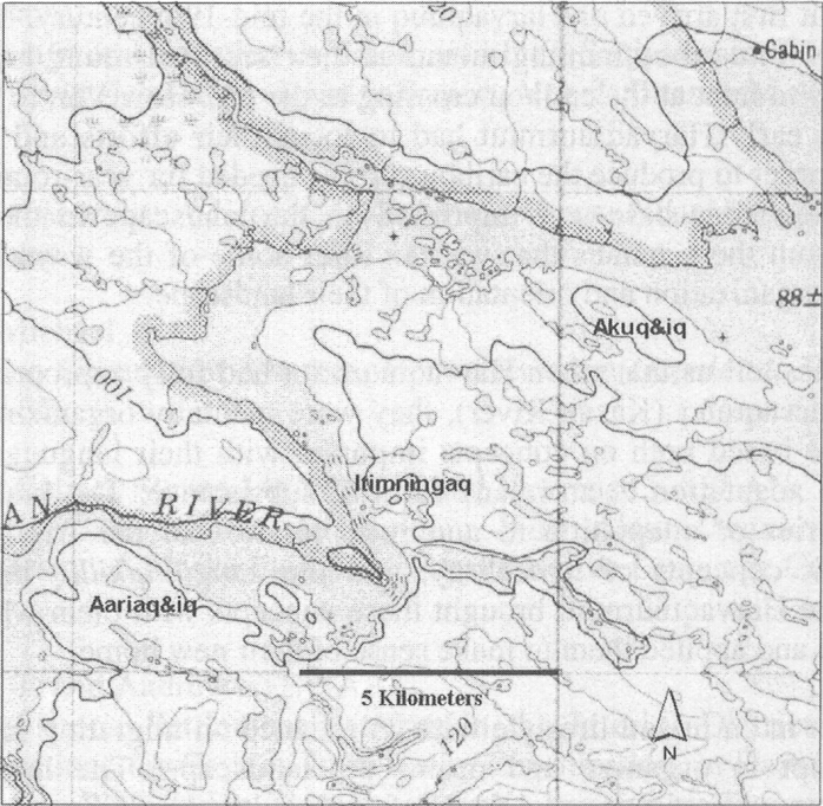


Figure 3. Itimningaq Rapids.

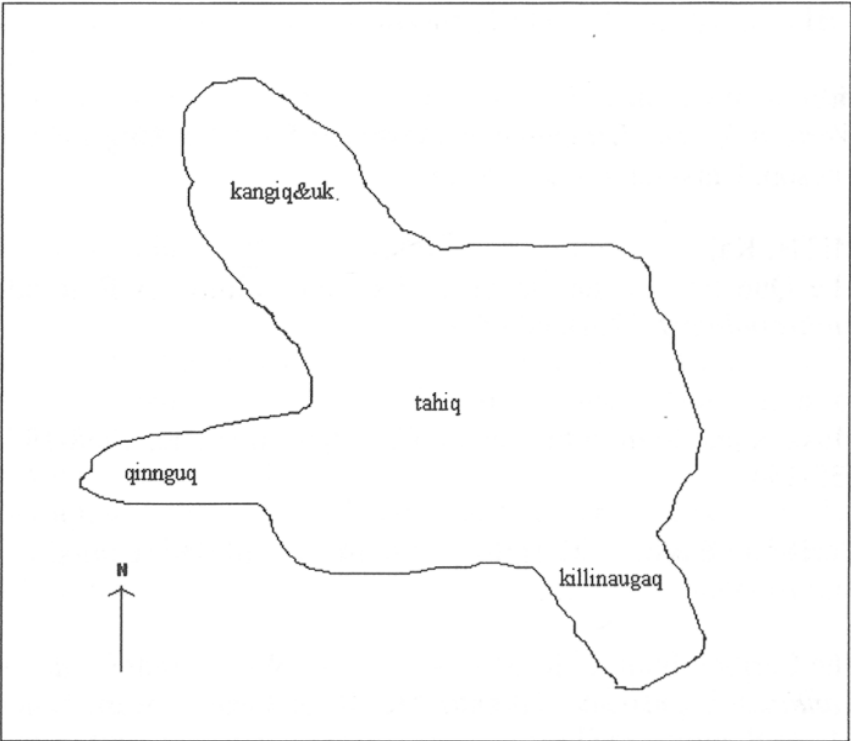


Figure 4. Generic lake with bay terminology.



Harvaqtuurmiut first arrived on Harvaqtuuq in the mid-19th century. These Inuit were very familiar with caribou hunting inland as their seasonal round had them moving inland annually to hunt at the caribou crossing in the fall. However, to spend the entire season inland, early Harvaqtuurmiut had to focus their efforts and specialize their knowledge in order to produce the caribou surplus needed for year-round survival. This specialized knowledge base was imprinted on the landscape in the form of place names. It is from these names that we can infer some of the ways Harvaqtuurmiut conceived the organization and orientation of their landscape.

Place names tell us that when Harvaqtuurmiut had fully appropriated their home territory on Harvaqtuuq (Kazan River), they were mentally organizing and orienting their landscape based both on concepts imported with their language, and concepts resulting from adaptation to an inland form of subsistence. The Inuktitut language, through centuries of adaptation to and interpretation of the Arctic environment, produced Inuit concepts of hydrology, and the *kangilliq/killiq* binary pair. The ancestors of the Harvaqtuurmiut brought these concepts with them when they arrived on Harvaqtuuq and applied them to make sense of their new home.

Immersion in an inland lifestyle with its reliance on migrating caribou produced another concept to organize and orient the landscape. The migrating caribou themselves were an environmental force of such cultural significance that landscape was perceived in reference to their movements.

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